

Nonprofit Links Financial Literacy with Economic Assistance for Struggling Military and Veterans Tour

(PRBuzz) June 15, 2012 -- As thousands of military families continue to address the financial challenges from frequent relocations and loss of income during deployment and returning warriors face unemployment, and excessive credit card debt when they come home, nonprofit organizations struggle to meet the increasing demand for emergency financial assistance that can make a difference. A wife of a Marine serving in Afghanistan needs \$300.00 to get the car repaired; an injured Army Veteran can't pay the rent as he waits for VA benefits to begin; a Navy wife with four children just got laid off from her job and needs help with power bills. As these proud men and women search for assistance, scores of nonprofit organizations that are positioned to help face their own financial predicament as the demand for their services exceeds the donations they depend on.

"There are literally thousands of nonprofit organizations out there who want to help current and former military families" said John Pickens, Executive Director for VeteransPlus and the Yellow Ribbon Registry Network, nonprofits. "The problem is not a lack of organizations or people who want to help", Pickens continued. "There are great nonprofit organizations that assist with housing, employment, education, child care, and mental health issues. When it comes to providing financial assistance, responsible nonprofit organizations owe it to their donors and more importantly to those they are helping, to provide more than a handout, they need to address the underlying issues associated with each request for assistance."

VeteransPlus, a Florida based nonprofit financial education and counseling organization began conducting free financial counseling for Veterans and military families in 2008. In 2011, the organization was named the winner of the prestigious Champion of Financial Literacy Award by Florida's Chief Financial Officer and the Florida Financial Literacy Council for providing financial education to more than 4,000 military personnel and their families in that year. VeteransPlus currently provides financial education and counseling for its partners which include: The PenFed Foundation, The Bob Woodruff Foundation, Wounded Warrior Project, Soldiers' Angels, USA Cares, Rebuild Hope, TAMCO Foundation, Our Forgotten Warriors, Final Salute, Our Heroes Journey, Freedom Is Not Free, Blue Star Families, California Dept of Veteran Affairs, The American Legion, The Department of Defense, Hire Heroes USA, Project Hired, and through a recent partnership with Citi Salutes.

In 2012, the organization established the Yellow Ribbon Registry Network (YRRN) www.yrrn.org as a platform to: allow partner nonprofit organizations to connect, collaborate and reduce duplication; offer those who require assistance a method to reach many organizations with a single application; and to provide the American public with an opportunity to donate directly to those men and women in need of help. Perhaps the most important feature of this network is that each time an applicant requests aid from a participating nonprofit, financial counselors from VeteransPlus (most of whom are Veterans themselves) contact the applicant and conduct a financial assessment for the partners while providing one-on-one counseling - all prior to the applicant receiving the assistance they seek. As the YRRN continually collects donor, user and provider information for thousands of requests, this secure database becomes increasingly valuable. Not only to the non-profits involved, who are reporting information on those they assist, but as a means to assure donors that their contributions have not only helped meet an immediate need, but have improved long term financial literacy of those needing assistance nationwide. "We will continue to look for opportunities to provide financial education services and we believe the YRRN is cutting edge in so many ways to maximize the communication and technology that's afforded in today's world" said Chris Fitzpatrick, Director of Strategic Partnerships.

To learn more about VeteransPlus: www.VeteransPlus.org

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